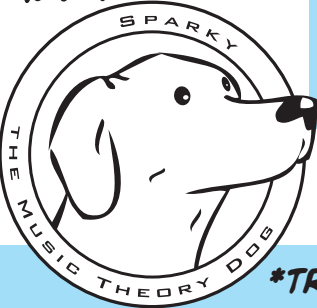


hey, it's kids!

SPARKY THE MUSIC THEORY DOG!



Q: Dear Sparky: I understand that we're supposed to beam rhythms to show the organization of beats in the measure, but is there an easy way to beam complex rhythms?

--A.Y., Minnesota, USA

A: WOOF!*

***TRANSLATION:** NOTES SHOULD BE BEAMED IN GROUPS THAT ILLUSTRATE THE METER. FOR SIMPLE RHYTHMS, THIS IS PRETTY EASY TO DO; SIMPLY GROUP ANY NOTES THAT CAN BE BEAMED (QUAVERS AND SMALLER) INTO GROUPS THAT ARE EQUAL TO THE BEAT UNIT OF THE CURRENT METER.



FOR COMPLEX RHYTHMS, HOWEVER, THINGS CAN GET COMPLICATED... WHEN A RHYTHM INCLUDES THINGS LIKE SYNCOPATIONS OR OTHER OFF-BEAT FIGURES, ILLUSTRATING THE METER MAY INVOLVE DIVIDING NOTES ACROSS BEAT UNITS WITH TIES. FORTUNATELY, THERE IS A STEP-BY-STEP SYSTEM FOR CORRECTLY BEAMING THESE COMPLICATED RHYTHMS!

FOR EXAMPLE, LET'S TAKE THIS RHYTHM, WHICH IS WRITTEN WITHOUT BEAMING.



STEP 1: FIND THE SMALLEST NOTE VALUE USED, AND FILL A COMPLETE MEASURE WITH THIS TYPE OF NOTE, BEAMED IN GROUPS THAT ARE EQUAL TO A BEAT UNIT IN THE CURRENT METER.



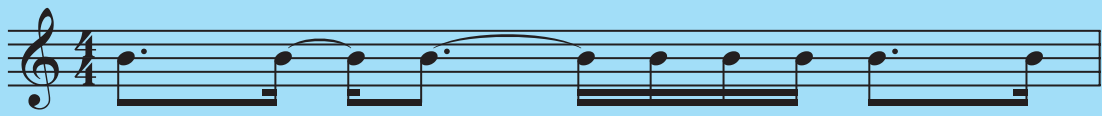
STEP 2: ADD TIES BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL NOTES TO RECREATE THE ORIGINAL RHYTHM. MAKE SURE THAT EACH TIED GROUP CORRESPONDS TO A NOTE IN THE RHYTHM YOU STARTED WITH!

YES, I KNOW IT LOOKS WEIRD... BUT WE'RE NOT DONE YET!



STEP 3: FIND EVERY GROUP OF TWO OR MORE NOTES THAT ARE BOTH TIED TOGETHER AND BEAMED TOGETHER, AND REPLACE THEM WITH A SINGLE NOTE OF EQUIVALENT VALUE.

IF YOU HAVE NOTES THAT ARE TIED OR BEAMED, BUT NOT BOTH, THEN LEAVE THEM ALONE!



A CORRECTLY BEAMED RHYTHM MAY INCLUDE TIES, BUT IT WILL VERY CLEARLY SHOW THE BEATS IN THE MEASURE... WHICH, IN TURN, MAKES IT EASIER FOR THE PERFORMER TO READ!

DOING STUFF THE SPARKY WAY IS ALWAYS FUN!